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CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY SALISBURY SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.4

TOM'S TRIP UP THE NILE

E VERY fellow is not so fortunate as Tom in having a rich uncle to take him on a long trip up the Nile, so the Editor has persuaded Tom's mother to allow him to use the letters he wrote her during his wonderful journey, and here they are in print for you to read.

The first was posted at Port Said, at which place Tom first set foot in Africa.

22 November, 1923

My Dear Mother,

Uncle and I have a cabin to ourselves. There are two bunks, one above the other. I sleep in the top one and uncle in the bottom. We have a port hole which has to be closed on rough days. I'm up on deck all the time I can be. This ship has two funnels painted yellowish. It was jolly cold most of the way to Gib., and we didn't see very much; no! not because I was ill—lots of people were, but I got through the Bay all right.

Great excitement this morning! The siren blew, and everybody thought something was up, but it was only boat drill. As the siren sounds all hands fall in on the boat deck and go to their various boats just as they would if an accident happened to us. An officer with a party of men goes to each boat to see that the falls—you know, the ropes which let the boat down to the water—are in working order. They're awfully good at it. I'm sure if we struck anything we'd all get off quite easily.

One of the funniest things is that they alter the clock each night. That's because we're going nearly due east.

A clergyman on board has been telling us about the Africans, where he lives. He's a nice sort, and we've played deck quoits with him. He says he's going up the Nile and will introduce us to some places. We've

been over a week from London. I haven't much time to write more now, for we've sighted the African coast and shall be in Port Said this afternoon.

Your loving son,

TOM.

P.S.—Jim can ride my bike if he'll keep it clean. I hope you got the card I posted at Marseilles.

Shepheard's Hotel, Cairo, 29 November, 1923

My DEAR MOTHER,

We've been in Africa a week, but it isn't a bit like I expected it to be. No forests, but all towns and villages, and quite civilized so far. You know what I mean, there are trains and trams; and this hotel is just like one in London, only the waiters are brown men with long white robes, with sashes round their waists and turbans on. Mr. Standfast, that's the clergyman I told you about, took us out in the tram to what they call Old Cairo. You pay, I think, two piastres; that is

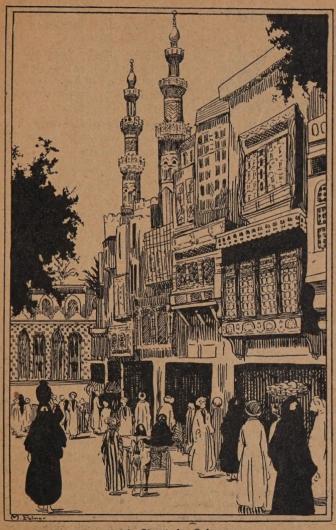
about 5d. in English money.

There we saw the hospital of the Church Missionary Society. There are so many flies in Egypt, and the water is not always good, so people get diseases and come to the hospital. The doctors and nurses are English missionaries, and they teach the people as well as cure them. These people are Moslems, but they are a cruel lot. You should see the donkeys loaded, some with big baskets full of sand, others with some clover-looking stuff, others with big sacks, and some little donkeys with big fat men riding on them. If Aunt Mary was here, I'm sure she'd go up to the driver and want to be angry with him! It is a shame! Goodbye. We start to-morrow night for Khartoum.

With love,

TOM.

[Tom was quite right. The religion of Egypt is



A Street in Cairo



The dotted line shows the route that Tom took by train with his uncle; they went the rest of the way by steamer.

called Islam or Mohammedanism, the people themselves Moslems. They believe that Mohammed, who was born in Arabia, is the Prophet of God, making the Lord Jesus Christ quite inferior to him. Their religion allows slavery and many other unworthy things.—Editor.]

Gordon Hotel, Khartoum, 5 December, 1923 My DEAR MOTHER,

This is a lovely place. I am writing in the garden under a palm tree. They say it is not so cool in July and August. Then it is much too hot.

We had a topping journey, in the train first of all. I slept till we got nearly to Luxer; it was night, of I wish we could course. have stayed there for the whole of the next day. Then perhaps we might have gone to see Tutankhamen's tomb. But after waiting a bit we changed there on to another small gauge railway. Most of the way was by or near the Nile, and we had glorious views of sailing boats and palms and temples. Uncle said it made his eyes tired looking out into the sunshine so much, but I was all right.

At Assuan we had to move on to a big steamer. It was lovely going up the river. Only one thing I was sorry for,—we hadn't time to see the big dam. At Wady Halfa we got into the train again. I think I like the steamer better than the train. You can walk about the deck of it, of course. I never saw so much sand in my life as I did coming from Wady Halfa to—I forget the other place. [Tom means Abu Hamed. If you look at the map you will see they crossed a big desert, leaving the river to make a great bend.—Ed.]

Uncle was rather tired when we got to Khartoum, and I was glad when I saw the big river once again, which we crossed over by a large bridge. I am to go with uncle to tea with Mr. Standfast at the Clergy House, and I may see the Bishop, so I must close, with

love to you all.

Your loving son, TOM

Gordon Hotel, Khartoum,

My Dear Mother, 11 December, 1923
After I finished my last letter we went to the Clergy House and I saw the Bishop. To tell you a secret, of course I wanted to see him, but I thought he wouldn't be, you know, exactly chummy! Well, he was absolutely great. We played tennis after, and he's a real sport. Uncle had a long talk with him, and you know Uncle does not like all clergymen!

I have seen the palace where General Gordon was killed, and also the cathedral. The thing I liked best was the little mat which they have preserved in a glass case in the cathedral. It is Gordon's prayer mat. I think I shall read his life when I get home.

To-morrow we are going over to Omdurman. I hope Father's lumbago is better. Goodbye.

With love, from

TOM.

Gordon Hotel, Khartoum,

19 December, 1923

My DEAR MOTHER,

In all my life I never enjoyed myself so much! First we had donkeys to the ferry instead of going by the tram. It was *much* nicer. Then we crossed over the Blue and White Niles in quite a big steamer. Uncle pointed out to me the difference in the colour of the waters of the two rivers. Then, on the other side, we

took donkeys again and went round what they call the *suk* (market). There were lots of things to buy in the little open shops. There are no counters, but the goods are spread out on a sort of low shelf and in baskets, and the shopman sits among them. Some of these openair shops are like grocers' shops; others have all kinds of shoes,



mostly dyed red. The most interesting were the shops which sold wonderful ivory ornaments, daggers and old

swords. There were plenty of nuts.

We went to the school to see some friends of the missionary, but they were all girls at the school. The hospital, where Dr. Lloyd is, was splendid, though not so big as the one in Cairo.

Uncle came home with rather a headache. I hope he is all right, or we shan't be going anywhere to-morrow.

Your loving son,

TOM.

P.S.—Uncle is much better, and says it was a little touch of the sun which made him feel unwell yesterday. We leave here on the 21st, and shall spend Christmas on the Nile steamer.

S.G.S. Gedid. White Nile. Sudan.

28 December, 1923

My DEAR MOTHER.

They tell us that we shall pass a steamer going north to-day, so I am sending you a little account of our journey.

I'm one of the luckiest fellows to be on this trip. It's A 1 on this steamer. She's the biggest of the fleet and has one big paddle wheel at the back. Tomorrow we are going to sleep on the top deck. That will be lovely!

What you you think? The missionary, Mr. Standfast, is on board, and has been so topping as to ask us to stay at his mission station Malek on our way back. Uncle isn't quite sure whether we shall have time. I do hope we shall.

Do you know there are actual waves on this White Nile. It's very wide, sometimes over a mile. The other day we passed through a swing bridge which carries the railway over the river. The captain, a brown man called the Rice, but you don't spell it like that [Reis is the proper way.—Ed.] is very clever. There was only the smallest space to spare, but we went rushing through exactly in the middle. It was great! Mother, I should like to be an engineer.

After the bridge, the country seemed to change, and we left the sandy banks behind, and now we see trees, grass, and-what do you think?-at last WILD BEASTS! Yes, we saw some yesterday. Uncle would like to shoot them, but we are not allowed to from the steamer.

With much love. We are both well,

["S.G.S." means Sudan Government Steamer.]

S.G.S. Gedid,

White Nile, 30 December, 1923

My DEAR MOTHER,

We are in the strangest country that I ever heard of. Yesterday we left the last stopping place behind, for we shall steam on and on for three days without stopping now. The river, after Lake No, is quite narrow; just about wide enough for two steamers to pass. We haven't seen a single person or a house since we came into this part, which they call the Sudd.

It is not here, and we have to be careful not to get in the sun without our hats. We sleep on the top deck, and at night before we go to bed under our mosquito nets, we get exercise by walking up and down, and watching the big fires away in the distance across the great, great marsh of reeds.

You cannot see anything but the tops of these reeds and papyrus. I shall be glad when we get the other side of it. It is so tame.

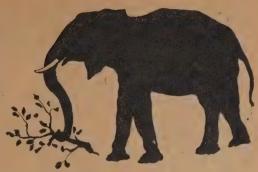
I January, 1924

At last we've got through, but the country is not much better. There are a few trees on one side now. Oh, yesterday, I must tell you, we were all at our tea in the saloon and wishing it was a little cooler, when we heard shouting, and the engineer told us that elephants were in sight. Of course we rushed up on to the top deck with our glasses, and sure enough there they were, a quarter of a mile away! You could only see their great backs and heads. There were about thirty of them, and almost every one had a white bird perched on its back.

3 January, 1924

It is no good posting to you, although we have a post office on the barge which the steamer tows along-side; for we are the mail ourselves, and we take back

the letters to Khartoum. We see people and villages now, and lots of cattle kraals. The people are strange -so black. and they



smear ashes over their bodies.

8 January, 1924

Since my last bit of letter we've travelled a long way. I must hurry up and tell you, because Uncle has promised to stay at Malek, and we are due there this after-

noon. I must post this before we land.

The most exciting thing was passing through the rapids. Really it made us hold our breath, for there was only the narrowest passage to go through. Going up against the stream was not so bad; but coming down, the water rushed so madly through, as though it wanted to push us on to the rocks in its angry mood. Our captain is most clever though, and before we entered the rapids he turned the steamer round, so that we went stern first, with the stern wheel doing a sort of back pedalling.

At Rejaf we had nearly twenty-four hours, and we went on shore and climbed the big hill, which is very steep and about 400 feet above the plain. I was jolly glad to get on my legs again. We had been on board nearly a fortnight and had travelled over 1100 miles. There was a strange rock at the foot of the hill—just like a giant's table with one leg in the middle, and big enough for cows to stand under. We saw troops of baboons.

At Mongalla we stayed two hours and saw the soldiers drilling, and also the little school where black missionaries from Uganda teach the native boys. These young men had left their homes in Uganda 400 miles or so away to become missionaries in the Sudan. Don't you think they were plucky? I never knew before that any people except white people became missionaries.

There was a place near the rapids called Juba, where there was quite a big school. We hadn't much time but I heard Uncle say the missionary there was doing a splendid work in training the sons of chiefs.

Goodbye for now, with love,

Yours,

TOM

Malek,

13 January, 1924

My DEAR MOTHER,

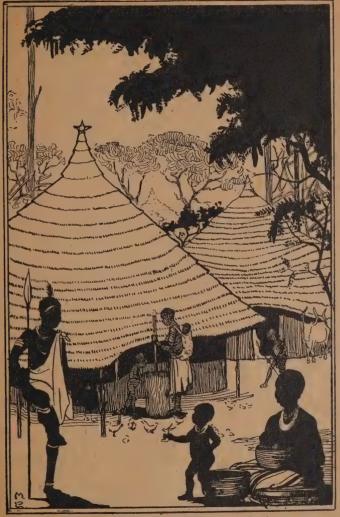
To-day is Sunday, so I want to tell you a little about

this place.

Mr. Standfast is the only missionary here now; the other man left by the boat we arrived on. He has kindly given us a room and one end of his veranda, and we are quite comfortable. Uncle is glad to have a rest

from travelling.

To-day we went to church. Of course it isn't like ours at home. It is built of lots of poles and has a thatched roof of grass. The bell is outside on a pole, and they say that the people first thought the English worshipped it. All the people are absolutely black. They belong to the Dinka tribe. Lots of the men had white shirts on. The women sat on the ground, and the men on pieces of rough stick. When the Creed was said, only some stood up, and I wondered why. Mr. Standfast explained that they were the Christians. Can you believe such savage people could become Christians? But it is really a fact.



In a Dinka Village; the men like to stand on one leg and rest the other on the knee.

Yesterday being Saturday, lots of fellows played football. Some of them can run; they have such long legs! They don't wear boots, but they kick as well without them. Now I must leave off, because I am going with Mr. Standfast across the river to the cattle kraal, where he is going to preach to the people. Some of these men come from the inland Dinka villages. Their people keep big herds of cattle with tremendous horns, and humps on their backs. Just now most of the cattle are near the river because there is no water for them to drink inland. Some people always live by the river; these have dugout canoes and fish with long baskets, and they hunt the hippos.

We have just got back from the west bank. Mr. Standfast took three Christian boys with him, and a big roll of pictures. When the people saw us coming, they came round us and wanted to know who I was, and asked lots of questions, which of course I didn't understand. Then by and by Mr. Standfast told them to be quiet while he talked to the great Spirit. Then he said something to them; after that there was a hymn; then one of the Christian black men talked to the people.

Every now and then they asked questions, and sometimes they shouted to their friends to come and see the pictures. These people with the cows are very tall and many of the men and children wear no clothes; but lots of them smear grey wood ash over themselves which gives them a very strange look.

Sunday, 20 January, 1924

So many things have happened this week!

On Monday Mr. Standfast let me help him with his patients. He isn't a doctor, but so many people come to him that he gives them medicine and helps them all he can. My job was to put the thermometer in the patient's mouth. I've learnt quite a lot. If you are well your temperature is 98.4 degrees; if you are ill,



it goes up to 100 degrees or more. Then if it's fever that's the matter, they drink Epsom salts and have quinine. It is interesting!

Just as we had finished the dispensary we heard a great noise in the village. We learned it was a medicine-man ceremony going on; so Mr. Standfast took me to see it. He made inquiries and discovered that a young wife of a headman

village was ill and they were going to try to cure her by their witch-doctor tricks. This is what happened. A woman with a wisp of grass in her hand rushed from the sick woman's hut to a group of men, and made one of them return with her, taking a chicken with him. The women then danced round the sick woman who was brought outside. They pretended to beat the sick woman with wisps of grass and sang some sort of song. Then the man came forward with the chicken, and all the women suddenly gave a shrill whoo and threw their arms in the air.

This strange cry was repeated. Then the man beat the chicken's head on the ground till it was dead. He then gave it to an old woman who ran off with it, followed by all the others, shricking away at the evil spirit.

It gave me a creepy feeling down my back; it was so sort of ghosty. Of course it does no good, but they thought it would frighten away the bad spirit that was

causing the woman's illness.

After this we went over to the mission school. One boy talked to me in English. Isn't it wonderful? He is a Christian. Mr. Standfast told me that some of the Christian men get scoffed at by their heathen friends for not taking part in the sacrifices and heathen dances. It does really mean some pluck.

I meant to finish my letter this afternoon, but just as I had got so far there was another row in the village, this time caused by a fight. Mr. Standfast would not let me go, but he went and stopped it. To do this he had to get into the thick of the fight and separate the chief fighters. He is a topper. I have changed my mind about being an engineer, Mother; I am going to be a missionary doctor and come out and do something better for the people than they can do by killing chickens; the silly asses might know better-but I forgot they are savages and it's up to us to tell them! As a matter of fact Mr. Standfast reminded me this morning that Britain was once a very savage islandbefore missionaries came to us. When I get home I'm going to make a start by rolling bandages for the dispensary here.

The cows here have awfully long horns, but they are not really fierce. In the day time they are looked after by the young boys who stand on one leg balancing themselves with their sharp spear stuck in the ground. At night each cow is tied up to a peg. The cattle men make the ropes of palm leaves, which have been slit into thin strips and prepared and made tough. I watched some of them do it. They sat on the ground with the end of the new rope between the big and second toe and twisted with their hands, putting in short lengths of palm leaves as the rope grew longer.

You soon get to know the boys who are Christians, or who have lived a long while at the mission station. They are cleaner in their ways, and I think they look happier. You see they no longer are afraid of the evil spirit but believe as we do in God as their Father. I had a long yarn with Mr. Standfast. He's got a good name, hasn't he? Uncle likes him because he's real and lives as he preaches.

22 January, 1924

About 10 o'clock this morning the steamer came, not the one which has brought us, but one much like it.



Thank you so much for your letter. Yes, I'll try and get you some picture postcards. I wish I had a camera; but never mind, I will buy some cards in Khartoum.

Mr. Standfast had some letters which he was very glad to get; but there was

one from his Society—the Church Missionary Society—saying that they are so short of money that no new missionary can be sent out; and yet one missionary in a lonely part of Sudan—I forget the name of the place—is very ill because of working too hard, and the one at Juba has to go home because of illness.

I've got another idea besides the bandages; I'm going to keep rabbits and trade with them; that'll

bring in quite a lot of money.

I don't think it is any good for me to write more, because we leave by this steamer when she comes back.

Oh, I must tell you—very early this morning a boy came in to say there was a big herd of elephants near. Mr. Standfast took Uncle and me out, and while hiding behind an ant hill we saw nearly two hundred go by; it was absolutely topping. It made you feel a bit awed.

Sometimes, Mr. Standfast said, these big herds come at night and break down the garden fence; if not driven off by the firing of a gun they do a lot of damage in the garden. They often lift off the roofs of the native corn-store huts, and help themselves to the corn.

Occasionally one member of a big herd of elephants will be found wandering alone. For some reason he has been turned out by the others. This lonely one is

called a rogue elephant; he is generally very bad tempered and is dangerous to meet!

Goodbye for now,

With love from

TOM

[Since we received Tom's letters, news has reached us of the death, from the dreaded blackwater fever, of one of the missionaries in the Southern Sudan. A fellow missionary, who himself was ill, started on a journey of a hundred miles to his assistance as soon as he heard of his illness. He collapsed on his way to the sick missionary but was carried on by Africans, arriving just too late to see his friend.

If you would like to know more of this country where Tom spent a holiday, buy a little red book called: "Among the Pagans of the Southern Sudan."—Ed.]



A Dinka with his Fishing Trap.

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